

**Winner Head Over Heels in the 2008 Extreme Mustang Makeover
114 Mustangs Competed for \$50,000**

SEPTEMBER 20, 2008 - FORT WORTH, TEXAS - Mark Lyon of Arlington, Neb., took the grand prize at the second annual Fort Dodge Extreme Mustang Makeover Legends Finals, September 20 in Fort Worth, Texas, in the event's most difficult level of competition, after falling from his horse mid-performance. He demonstrated that a well-trained horse doesn't always need a rider to win, capturing the \$12,500 top prize and the hearts of thousands watching his performance on Christian, a three-year-old, bay, mustang gelding.

Well into Lyon's textbook perfect performance, which included a ballet of movement including deep stops and picture perfect spins, the crowd's hearts fell when he leaned to Christian's side in a tight turn and his saddle slipped causing him to fall. Since the entire focus of the judges was on the mustang's ability, judges awarded Christian for his reaction to this unforeseen happening. Judge and famed horse trainer, John Lyons, said, "That was the best part of the whole performance. He did exactly what he was trained to do," describing how Christian stood and waited for his rider to get back on. Lyon went on to take the horse through his paces firing a shooting pistol at balloons and riding through a ring of fire.

A passionate and proud Lyon's said, "It's about a horse doing his job. Trainers can get a horse to do something, but when you're off he has freewill." Lyon, who has trained numerous mustangs, worked with Christian for a week before he was able to touch him but he said that mustangs have a "natural agility" that makes them stand out from domesticated horses and learn faster.

The Legends division represented the pinnacle of difficulty for the 2008 Extreme Mustang Makeover. Trainers determined which category their mustangs would compete in based on the progress they believed the wild horses had made in their 100 days of training. A total of 55 mustangs competed in the "Legends" division, 45 in the intermediate "Idols" division, and 14 took on the elementary level "Stars" division.

Taking the Idols win earlier in the day was Careen Hammock of College Station, Tex., and her three-year-old gelding Taz, gathered from the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Wheeler Pass herd management area (HMA) and earned \$5,000 in prize money. Judges Suzy Jean of Valley View, Tex., Guy Woods of Pilot Point, Tex., and John Lyons selected the duo to win the second most difficult division at the event.

The entire Extreme Mustang Makeover is aimed to generate awareness about the value of America's mustangs and increase adoption of these incredible horses.

"Once they trust you, they'll do anything you want," said Hammock of her experience training wild mustangs. "They just have so much heart."

Hammock, who has trained horses for 15 years, says this moving experience with Taz taught her patience and she looks forward to doing it again at next year's Extreme Mustang Makeover. This was her first time to show a mustang and she admitted to being a little intimidated walking into this weekend's competition, but, Taz showed no nerves as he captivated the crowd at the Fort Worth, Tex., Will Rogers Memorial Center.

The first winner of the 2008 Extreme Mustang Makeover was crowned September 19 when Jennifer Jess won the Stars division on Bullwinkle, a three-year-old bay gelding gathered from the Deer Lodge Canyon HMA of Nevada. Jess won the \$3,000 top prize of the \$6,000 purse for the Stars division. A total of \$70,000 was awarded during the three-day run of the show that ended with the adoption of all competition horses Sunday, September 21.

While Jess of Kaufman, Tex., has professionally trained domesticated horses since she was 14 years old, her participation in this year's Extreme Mustang Makeover was the first time she ever endeavored to train a wild mustang. With 100 days to train the animal, Jess worked in 60 days training Bullwinkle and says the experience "sharpened her skills" for training domesticated horses. She describes the event in a word, "awesome."

The Mustang Heritage Foundation, in cooperation with the BLM, hosted the Fort Dodge Extreme Mustang Makeover for the second year to increase adoptions of mustangs, like Christian. The event provided the public with the unique opportunity to see how wild mustangs can become trained horses and participate in the show ring. This year's event featured more than 300 mustangs trained by professional and non-professional trainers from across 38 states.